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SUBJECT: DRUGS IN CAMBODIA: DONORS COMPARE NOTES ON
EXISTING PROBLEM AND ASSISTANCE EFFORTS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Donors highlighted Cambodia's porous borders, rising rates of drug use, limited rehabilitation facilities, and limited government capacity during a June 20 roundtable discussion about Cambodia's drug problem. Several donor nations provide small-scale counternarcotics assistance to Cambodia, including laboratory equipment, technical advice, and training. Despite relatively modest USG counternarcotics assistance, ours is the only broad-based program of significant size. Frank comments by Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng indicate that he realizes the limitations of government officials charged with protecting Cambodia from the drug trade. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Japanese Ambassador Fumiaki Takahashi hosted a mini-Dublin group meeting on June 20 to share observations about Cambodia's drug situation, describe bilateral assistance to Cambodia, and determine Cambodia's need for external assistance. The Japanese embassy will use the information provided as input for the report to the Dublin Group meeting to take place July 12 in Brussels.

Drug Production Shifts, ATS Use Rises

¶3. (SBU) Giving a brief overview of regional and country-wide drug trends, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Representative Akira Fujino noted that opium production in the Golden Triangle is decreasing, and speculated that traffickers may begin importing Afghan opiates into the region. Fujino and Australian Federal Police Liaison Officer Kim Stewart commented that the regional production of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) has diversified--while it was once focused on Burma, law enforcement has uncovered superlabs in Fiji, the Philippines, and Malaysia over the past few years. Stewart observed that Cambodia could be an attractive country for development of a superlab due to law enforcement weaknesses.

¶4. (SBU) Looking specifically at Cambodia, Fujino noted that there has been a rapid increase in ATS use among youth, the unemployed, workers, sex workers, and street children. Fujino claimed that most ATS in Cambodia is produced in Burma and trafficked through Laos into Cambodia. Fujino also reported a significant increase in the number of drug-related law enforcement cases and seizures over the last two years. Stewart commented that there has been a recent spate of seizures of heroin being shipped from Cambodia to Australia in fish products, but Cambodia-Australia postal seizures of heroin have declined since last year.

15. (U) Fujino said that for the next three years, UNODC will focus its efforts on developing community-based drug abuse treatment services and providing technical assistance in support of National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD) reform and capacity building efforts.

US Outlines Cambodia's External Assistance Needs

16. (SBU) At the request of the Japanese Ambassador, Poleconoff outlined the external assistance Cambodia needs to adequately address its drug problem.

--Interdiction: Cambodia needs to increase patrols of northern Cambodian roads and waterways, establish checkpoints along the Mekong River and Highway 7, and bolster screening efforts at Phnom Penh and Siem Reap international airports. These efforts will require training for anti-drug police, customs, immigration, gendarmerie, and military border defense officers and border liaison officials and equipment like boats and fuel, drug identification kits, and field equipment (e.g. canteens, appropriate footwear, hammocks, two-way radios, handcuffs, binoculars, etc.).

--Demand reduction: Additional drug rehabilitation facilities should be established to help meet the large unmet demand for such services and extend their reach outside of the capital. Technical assistance and increased awareness of international best practices is needed to improve existing government-run rehabilitation facilities, which are essentially military boot camps that provide no rehabilitation services.

--Policy: Police officers and policy makers need English

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language and computer training and technical assistance to create an accurate database of drug arrest and seizure information and to facilitate cooperation with neighboring countries. Most importantly, the international community needs better information about the extent of drugs-related corruption within the Cambodian police and military and should increase efforts to fight corruption within relevant government agencies.

17. (SBU) There was broad consensus on these points, with Fujino noting that the current anti-corruption bill was defective. He pledged to raise the issue with the government. He also said that Thailand has apparently agreed to provide one boat to Cambodia for drug interdiction purposes. The Australian ambassador commented that availability of fuel is an important issue--it is a critical but often missing component of counternarcotics and military patrols, but it is difficult to control as it is so salable.

Donors Outline Bilateral Assistance Programs

18. (SBU) Country representatives summarized their bilateral counternarcotics assistance as follows:

Australia--Funds the 8-member Transnational Crime Team (TCT), which looks at all types of Cambodian-Australian crime, much of it drugs-related. Australia provides salaries, housing, and training for the team members and sent the team to Australia for a study visit. Over the past several years, Australia has also paid for other police officers to attend crime courses, which often include a narcotics component, in Jakarta, Hanoi, and Australia. Australian authorities conducted an assessment of Cambodia's borders and suggested projects that could be undertaken to strengthen the borders. The embassy hoped that the Cambodian government would approach donors for funding for these projects, but the government has not yet done this.

Canada--Sent a Cambodian police officer to a two week

training program in Canada. The Royal Mounted Police will be training 25 police officers in a one-week drug investigation course.

European Union--no projects

France--Will provide a gas chromatograph for the NACD Laboratory. The French Police Attache noted that Cambodia is not a priority for French law enforcement efforts.

Germany--Funds a Technical Advisor at the NACD. The advisor, Martin Lutterjohann, was very involved in drafting the NACD's five year drug control plan and is now helping develop the authority's work plan. Lutterjohann has told the German embassy that for the first time, the NACD and the National AIDS Authority are actively cooperating, but that the Ministry of Health is unwilling to view drug addiction as a health issue.

Japan--Has given a gas chromatograph and other drug analysis equipment. The chromatograph is now broken, but the GOJ hopes to repair it. Japan has provided funding for drug rehabilitation via UNODC's human security fund, but this program has not been yet been implemented due to UNODC staffing issues.

United Kingdom--Supports several projects on crime, including training to police and gendarmes stationed at the border, but no projects target drugs specifically.

Deputy PM: Law Enforcement Inexperienced, Unaccountable

¶9. (SBU) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Sar Kheng noted that while Cambodia does not produce drugs, it is an important transit point for both ATS and heroin. The government's five year plan on drug control emphasizes demand reduction, supply reduction, and risk reduction. He openly acknowledged the inexperience of Cambodian law enforcement and expressed concern about rising rates of ATS use. He highlighted a recent case where samples taken from a 50,000 tablet seizure tested positive for ATS in the field, but when it was re-tested in Phnom Penh only 10,000 of the 50,000 tablets were ATS. This could be the result of police

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corruption, he commented.

¶10. (SBU) Sar Kheng described a June 7 bust in which tabletting equipment capable of turning out thousands of tablets per day and six or seven sacks of precursor chemicals were seized in Phnom Penh while additional tabletting equipment was seized in Battambang province. Several individuals were arrested.

¶11. (SBU) The Deputy Prime Minister also spoke at length about the 1.4 tons of bullets that were erroneously shipped to the US Embassy two weeks ago in place of the expected art for the new USAID annex. This mistake highlights weaknesses at Customs and in cargo processing, and demonstrates that Cambodian government officials involved in border control fail to take responsibility for their actions, he said. He noted that there will be an inter-ministerial meeting later this week to discuss this failure.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: Even the limited USG assistance currently devoted to counternarcotics efforts in Cambodia far exceeds that from nearly every other country. The only other country with a significant program, Australia, provides exceptional support to a very small team who work exclusively on Cambodian-Australian transnational issues, rather than supporting broad-based efforts to improve Cambodian law enforcement as a whole. Sar Kheng's remarkably frank assessment, and in particular his admission that corruption may be at play and his criticism of lax government officials, is a good sign that the Deputy Prime Minister realizes that

real progress on drug trafficking will require new attitudes among Cambodian government officials charged with keeping the country drug free.

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